

JAMES E. "JIM" KING, JR.
President



Harold McLean
Public Counsel

STATE OF FLORIDA OFFICE OF PUBLIC COUNSEL

c/o THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE
111 WEST MADISON ST.
ROOM 812
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-1400
850-488-9330

JOHNNIE BYRD
Speaker



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CONTACT: Harold McLean
(850) 488-9330

Office of Public Counsel Files Petition to Speed Up Lifeline Application Processing

TALLAHASSEE— Florida's Office of Public Counsel has filed a petition with the Florida Public Service Commission that will require telecommunications companies that provide Lifeline service to speed up the processing of Lifeline applications.

Public Counsel Harold McLean said today that, "The Office of Public Counsel is responsible for certifying customers who are eligible for Lifeline under the income guidelines, and it is our goal to get customers who qualify onto the telephone network as quickly as possible." "To that end," he continued, "we are asking the PSC to require all telephone companies to process their Lifeline applications within 30 days or less in order to get these benefits into the hands of customers as quickly as possible."

Lifeline Service is available in Florida to all telephone customers who are receiving public assistance benefits, including TANF, Medicaid, SSI, Section 8 Public Housing, Food Stamps, WAGES and LIHEAP. In addition, those households whose income is below 125% of the Federal poverty guidelines are also eligible for the Lifeline credits that can be as much as \$13.50 per month.

Customers who qualify for the Lifeline credits based on participation in a public assistance program should contact their telephone company for details. The Office of Public Counsel also certifies Lifeline eligibility under the income guidelines that vary according to the household

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size. For example, a household with two persons can qualify for Lifeline credits if the total annual household income is less than \$15,612. Customers can contact the Public Counsel's office by calling the Lifeline number 800-540-7039, or applications can be filed on the internet at www.opc.state.fl.us.

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